

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 AID-05 EB-08 COME-00 AGRE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1763

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E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S TRIP UPCOUNTRY

BEGIN SUMMARY. IN FIVE-DAY ORIENTATION TRIP TO
INTERIOR OF IVORY COAST, AMBASSADOR FOUND GOIC MAKING
IMPRESSIVE EFFORTS AT REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ALTHOUGH
DRAMATIC GAP STILL EXISTS BETWEEN ABIDJAN AND CITIES
UPCOUNTRY. DEVELOPMENT OF INTERIOR, WHILE OFF TO A
GOOD START, WILL REQUIRE CONTINUED HEAVY INVESTMENT ON
PART OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT BEFORE PROJECTS BEGIN PAYING
THEIR OWN WAY. RECEPTION BY LOCAL OFFICIALS WAS WARM
AND CORDIAL AT EVERY STOP. END SUMMARY.

1. FIRST STOP ON JANUARY 17-21 TRIP WAS SAN PEDRO, NEW
TOWN AND PORT CARVED OUT OF ONE OF IVORY COAST'S MOST
ISOLATED AND UNDERDEVELOPED AREAS IN SOUTHWEST OF COUNTRY.
PROGRESS MADE BY ARSO (SOUTHWEST DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION)
IS IMPRESSIVE WITH POPULATION OF NEWLY CONSTRUCTED AND
RAPIDLY GROWING TOWN NOW NUMBERING 40,000, INCLUDING
NUMEROUS IMMIGRANTS FROM LIBERIA AND GUINEA. SAN PEDRO
REMAINS HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON FORESTRY WITH WOOD PRODUCTS
CNSTITUTING 80 PERCENT OF THE PORT'S TRAFFIC, MOSTLY
EXPORTED IN THE FORM OF LARGE LOGS OR ROUGH-SAWN PLANKS.

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THE FUTURE OF SAN PEDRO IS SOMEWHAT CLOUDED BY THE
RAPIDLY DIMINISHING TIMBER SUPPLY (TO BE EXHAUSTED BY MID-
1980'S, ACCORDING TO SOME ESTIMATES), THE AS-YET INADEQUATE
REFORESTATION SCHEMES, AND THE DIMMED PROSPECTS FOR THE
LARGE IRON-ORE PROJECT NEAR MAN WHICH WAS ORIGINALLY TO
HAVE INCLUDED CONSTRUCTION OF A RAILWAY LINE TO SAN PEDRO.
DIVERSIFICATION OF THE AREA IS BEGINNING, INCLUDING RICE,

RUBBER, COCOA, AND A PAPER PULP PROJECT, BUT THESE ARE STILL IN THE EARLY STAGES. FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS, UNTIL THESE PROJECTS BEGIN TO COME ON STREAM, SAN PEDRO WILL CONTINUE TO REQUIRE HEAVY INVESTMENT INPUTS FROM THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT.

2. DALOA, LOCATED IN RICH AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST AREA IN CENTER-WEST OF IVORY COAST, IS THIRD LARGEST CITY IN COUNTRY WITH WELL-ESTABLISHED COFFEE AND COCOA PLANTIONS. OF PARTICULAR INTEREST DURING AMBASSADOR'S TRIP WAS VISIT TO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH PROJECT WHERE EFFORT BEING MADE, APPARENTLY WITH SOME SUCCESS, TO DEVELOP A HYBRID ARABUSTA COFFEE PLANT COMBINING THE SOMEWHAT BITTER-TASTING ROBUSTA COFFEE NATIVE TO IVORY COAST WITH THE MELLOWER ARIBICA VARIETY OF LATIN AMERICA. SUCCESS IN THIS PROJECT COULD MAKE IVORIAN COFFEE SUBSTANTIALLY MORE ATTRACTIVE ON THE WORLD MARKET THAN IT ALREADY IS. A SECOND PROJECT OF INTEREST IN DALOA WAS THE GOIC PROGRAM OF OPENING UP NEW AREAS OF CULTIVATION BY TURNING OVER GOVERNMENT FOREST LAND TO VILLAGE COOPERATIVES WILLING TO UNDERTAKE THE DEVELOPMENT OF COCOA PLANTIONS UNDER GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE.

3. ODIENNE IN NORTH, LIKE SAN PEDRO IN SOUTH, REPRESENTS A CENTER OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT INTO WHICH THE GOIC IS INVESTING SUBSTANTIAL FUNDS IN AN ATTEMPT TO PROMOTE MORE BALANCED DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY. PARTLY BECAUSE OF ITS ISOLATION AND SCANT NATURAL RESOURCES BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF THE DISINCLINATION OF THE MALINKET TRIBESMEN OF THE AREA LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO FARMING, ODIENNE HAS REMAINED ONE OF THE POOREST AREAS OF IVORY COAST. ONE SUCCESSFUL PROJECT HAS BEEN THE CULTIVATION OF RICE WITH ODIENNE CONTRIBUTING ITS SHARE TO THE SITUATION WHEREIN IVORY COAST, STARTING FROM ZERO PRODUCTION SEVERAL YEARS AGO, NOW PRODUCES MORE RICE THAN THE COUNTRY CONSUMES. BECAUSE OF GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES TO ENCOURAGE PRODUCTION, HOWEVER, RICE IS STILL A DEFICIT ENTERPRISE IN IVORY COAST. AMBASSADOR ALSO TOOK OCCASION OF VISIT TO ODIENNE TO SIGN TWO SELF-HELP PROJECTS IN AREA.

4. THE SUGAR COMPLEX IN FERKESSE DOUGOU IS INTO FULL AND APPARENTLY SMOOTH OPERATIONS AT LAST WITH HOPES OF PRODUCING 35,000 TONS IN THE PRESENT CAMPAIGN AND THE MILL OPERATING 24 HOURS PER DAY AT THE TIME OF THE AMBASSADOR'S VISIT. THE NEW FRENCH MANAGER, CLAUDE BARRELIER, WHO REPLACED AMERICAN BARNARD SILVER SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, APPEARS HIGHLY COMPETENT AND RECEIVED THE PARTY WITH GREAT CORDIALITY. LIKE OTHER PROJECTS OBSERVED, HOWEVER, SUGAR COMPLEX REPRESENTS HEAVY INITIAL AND ON-

GOING INVESTMENT--FOR EXAMPLE, 3,000 LARGE SPRINKLERS TO SUPPLEMENT IRRIGATION AND LARGE COMBINES TO HARVEST 20 PERCENT OF THE CROP BECAUSE OF SHORTAGE OF HAND LABOR--AND IT WILL BE SOME TIME BEFORE THIS ENTERPRISE CAN HOPE TO OPERATE IN THE BLACK.

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5. CONCLUSIONS/COMMENTS. DESPITE THE GAP THAT EXISTS BETWEEN ABIDJAN AND THE INTERIOR, AND BETWEEN VARIOUS CITIES WITHIN THE INTERIOR, THE IMPRESSION ONE GETS IS THAT IVORY COAST IS A COUNTRY ON THE MOVE. RECENTLY INITIATED PROJECTS SUCH AS RICE AND SUGAR ARE COMING INTO FULL STREAM WITH OTHER PROJECTS AIMED AT AGRICULTURAL DIVERSIFICATION IN VARIOUS STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT. AS REPORTED IN ABIDJAN 0002, THE QUESTION WILL BE WHETHER THE GOIC WILL BE ABLE DURING THE NEXT FEW YEARS TO CONTINUE AND TO INCREASE THE HEAVY DEFICIT FINANCING REQUIRED TO SUSTAIN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT UNTIL INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS REACH THE TAKE-OFF POINT. IT WILL NOT BE EASY, BUT IVORY COAST HAS MADE A GOOD BEGINNING.

6. ON THE PERSONAL LEVEL, THE RECEPTION ACCORDED US BY LOCAL OFFICIALS WAS BOTH WARM AND EFFICIENTLY ORGANIZED WITH RANKING AUTHORITIES, OFTEN ACCOMPANIED BY TRADITIONAL DANCERS, PRESENT AT PLANESIDE AT EVERY STOP. GENERAL COMPETENCE AND KNOWLEDGE OF LOCAL CONDITIONS EXHIBITED BY PREFECTS WAS AS NOTEWORTHY AS THEIR FRIENDLINESS AND DESIRE TO BE HELPFUL. PREFECTS AT DALOA AND ODIENNE WERE ESPECIALLY IMPRESSIVE AND BOTH OF THESE OFFICIALS ARE EXCELLENT LEADER GRANT CANDIDATES. WE MADE A POINT OF VISITING WITH PEACE COPRS VOLUNTEERS AT EACH

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STOP AND WERE ENORMOUSLY IMPRESSED BOTH BY THE WORK THEY ARE ACCOMPLISHING AND BY THE GOOD RELATIONS THEY HAVE ESTABLISHED WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS. TWO PREFECTS SPOKE TO US ABOUT THEIR DESIRE FOR ADDITIONAL VOLUNTEERS.

7. THE WARM RECEPTION WE RECEIVED WAS, I BELIEVE, EVIDENCE BOTH OF THE IVORIAN HOSPITALITY OF WHICH THIS COUNTRY PRIDES ITSELF AND OF THE EXCELLENT RELATIONS WHICH CONTINUE TO EXIST BETWEEN IVORY COAST AND THE UNITED STATES. STEARNS

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